

North America Overview

“Canadians understand perfectly well that although the attack on September 11 occurred in the United States, it was not directed against only the United States”

Foreign Minister John Manley

21 September 2001

Canada

In the immediate wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Canada played an immensely helpful role by accepting the bulk of civil aviation traffic bound for the United States that was diverted when US airspace was ordered closed. Canada provided support for all stranded passengers. Media in the United States and elsewhere erroneously reported that some of the 19 hijackers responsible for crashing the four US commercial airliners had come to the United States via Canada; these allegations were proven false by subsequent investigation.

Overall anti-terrorism cooperation with Canada is excellent, and stands as a model of how the US and another nation can work together on terrorism issues. The relationship is exemplified by the US-Canadian Bilateral Consultative Group on Counterterrorism Cooperation, or BCG, which meets annually to review international terrorist trends and to plan ways to intensify joint counterterrorist efforts. BCG subgroups meet continually to carry out specific projects and exercises. Established in 1988, the BCG builds on a long history of mutual cooperation and complements numerous other bilateral fora that address law enforcement and immigration issues. All of these bilateral mechanisms have continued to grow and improve, especially in the wake of two significant arrests: the December 1999 arrest in Washington State of Usama Bin Ladin associate Ahmed Resam, and the March 1998 arrest in Canada of



Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien and President George W. Bush discussed the attacks on the United States during a meeting at the White House on 24 September 2001.

Saudi national Hani Al-Sayegh in connection with the Khobar Towers bombing. Under the US-Canada Terrorist Interdiction Program, or TIP, Canada records about one “hit” of known or suspected terrorists per week from the State Department’s Visa Lookout List.

Excellent law enforcement cooperation between the US and Canada is essential to protecting our citizens from crime and maintaining the massive flow of legitimate cross-border traffic. Day-to-day cooperation between law enforcement agencies is close and continuous. Seven US law enforcement agencies have officers posted to Ottawa and other Canadian cities. The Attorney General and Canadian Solicitor General conduct policy coordination at the US-Canada Cross-Border Crime Forum, established during the Prime Minister’s 1997 visit to Washington. (The Forum met most recently March 6, 2002 in Washington.) Other cooperative mechanisms include groups led by the immigration and customs services known as Border Vision and the Shared Border Accord, extradition and mutual legal assistance treaties, and an informa-

tion-sharing agreement between the US Drug Enforcement Administration and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Mexico

Mexican President Fox immediately expressed his support and condolence to President Bush after the 9/11 attacks and sent a team of earthquake response specialists to New York City to assist in the search for victims. Mexico also has expressed firm support for US military action and joined the consensus agreement behind Organization of American States resolutions voicing solidarity with the United States, invoking collective security, and invoking the Rio Treaty. Mexico also played a leading and successful role within the Organization of American States in negotiations for a new Convention on Terrorism.

On the security front, Mexico has taken many steps to enhance border security cooperation. Mexico implemented additional screening requirements for visa applicants from more than 50 countries. In addition, Mexico is implementing a photo-digitized passport-security system to tighten border controls and reduce fraud. The Mexican Secretary of Defense and Energy Secretary tightened security for petroleum and gas facilities and assigned a Navy task force to protect the offshore gas and oil infrastructure. Additionally, there are several points in the US-Mexico Border Partnership Action Plan related to homeland security issues, including those on Infrastructure protection, harmonization of entry port operations, precleared travelers, advanced passenger information, deterrence of alien smuggling, visa policy consultations, compatible databases and electronic exchange of information, screening third-country nationals, public/private-sector cooperation, secure in-transit shipments



Mexican President Vicente Fox toured the site of the World Trade Center disaster on 4 October 2001, accompanied by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and New York Governor George Pataki.

and railways, technology sharing, combating fraud, and contraband interdiction.

Mexico also has taken steps on the financial front. The Government of Mexico is working to ensure that domestic legislation and regulation are compliant with United Nations Security Council Resolutions. On several occasions, the National Bank Commission identified and reported suspicious financial transactions. In addition, the Treasury Secretary secured a bank account and several cash transactions linked to an identified terrorist. Furthermore, the Government of Mexico adopted new measures to counter terrorist financing, including increased monitoring of financial movements, exchange of information on unusual movements of capital, and more effective measures to combat money laundering.

As with Canada, there were erroneous media allegations that the September 11 hijackers used Mexico to enter the United States.